



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20202-_____

April 2000

Dear Colleague:

American families understand the need for quality after-school activities. Today, most parents work outside the home. And the reality is that many of these parents work because of economic necessity. Unfortunately, too many of their children do not have access to affordable, quality activities during the hours before and after school. Indeed, experts estimate that at least 5 million "latchkey" children come home to empty houses.

Parents today know that quality after-school activities are more than babysitting. They want their children to acquire new skills and broaden their education. Computer classes, art and music courses, tutoring in the basics, and community service rank high as valued activities for after-school programs.

Statistics tell us that most juvenile crime is committed between the hours of 2:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m. The largest spike in the number of offenses occurs in the hours immediately following students' release from school. We can no longer ignore the obvious. Our police chiefs have not. They believe that an investment in after-school programs is the best deterrent against juvenile crime and victimization.

Jointly authored by the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Justice, *Safe and Smart: Making the After-School Hours Work for Kids* was first published in June 1998. It provides evidence of the importance of safe and enriching learning opportunities for our children and youth. *Safe and Smart* has been widely used as a resource guide, and 50,000 copies have been distributed all over the country. *Working for Children and Families: Safe and Smart After-School Programs* updates our earlier guide. It includes the most recent research, resources, and information on promising practices.

Millions of Americans, struggling to be both good parents and good workers, would like to rely on after-school programs during the work week. We hope this report provides the motivation for others--superintendents and principals, parent leaders, communities, employers, local governments, and faith communities--to start up or expand after-school programs. These programs make good sense for children, families, and our nation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Janet Reno".

Janet Reno
Attorney General

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Dick Riley".

Richard W. Riley
Secretary of Education

**Working for Children
and Families:**
Safe and Smart After-School Programs

U.S. Department of Education

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It is also available on the U.S. Department of Justice's Web site at **<http://www.ncjrs.org/ojjhome.htm>**.

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Contents

Introduction	1
 Chapter 1	
The Potential of After-School Programs	5
Keeping Children on the Right Track.....	8
Enhancing Children's Academic Achievement.....	13
Supporting Children's Social Development and Their Relationships with Adults and Peers	21
Strengthening Schools, Families, and Communities	23
 Chapter 2	
What Works: Components of Exemplary After-School Programs	35
Goal Setting, Strong Management, and Sustainability	36
Quality After-School Staffing.....	38
Attention to Safety, Health, and Nutrition Issues	40
Effective Partnerships with Community-Based Organizations, Juvenile Justice Agencies, Law Enforcement, and Youth Groups	41
Strong Involvement of Families.....	44
Enriching Learning Opportunities	45
Linkages Between School-Day and After-School Personnel	47
Evaluation of Program Progress and Effectiveness	49
 Chapter 3	
Communities Meeting the Need for After-School Activities.....	53
 Bibliography	61
 After-School Resources	
Organizations, Web sites, listservs and videos	69
Publications.....	81
 Acknowledgments	87

Introduction

Today, millions of children return to an empty home after school. When the school bell rings, the anxiety for parents often just begins. They worry about whether their children are safe, whether they are susceptible to drugs and crime. In response to this pressing concern, many communities have created after-school programs to keep children and youth out of trouble and engaged in activities that help them learn. Recent polls have found overwhelming adult support to personally ensure access to after-school programs for children in their community.

However, a chronic shortage of quality after-school programs exists. According to parents, the need far exceeds the current supply. One recent study found that twice as many elementary and middle school parents wanted after-school programs than were currently available.

After-school programs provide a wide array of benefits to children, their families, schools, and the whole community. This report, jointly authored by the U.S. Departments of Education and Justice, focuses exclusively on the benefits children receive in terms of increased safety, reduced risk-taking, and improved learning.

First and foremost, after-school programs keep children of all ages safe and out of trouble. The after-school hours are the time when juvenile crime hits its peak, but through attentive adult supervision, quality after-school programs can protect our children. As this report shows, in communities with comprehensive programs, children are less likely to commit crimes or to be victimized.

After-school programs also can help to improve the academic performance of participating children. For many children, their reading and math scores have improved in large part because after-school programs allow them to focus attention on areas in which they are having difficulties. Many programs connect learning to more relaxed and enriching activities, thereby improving academic performance as well.

The purpose of this report is to present positive research and examples illustrating the potential of quality after-school activities to keep children safe, out of trouble, and learning. Specifically, it presents evidence of success—both empirical and anecdotal—for after-school activities; it identifies key components of high-quality programs and effective program practices; and it showcases exemplary after-school and extended learning models from across the country with promising results in our nation's efforts to keep children in school and on track.

Helping Children to Succeed

Children, families, and communities benefit in measurable ways from high-quality after-school and extended learning programs. As an alternative to children spending large numbers of hours alone or with peers in inadequately supervised activities, well-planned and well-staffed programs provide safe havens where children can learn, take part in supervised recreation, and build strong, positive relationships with responsible, caring adults and peers. Communities fare better when their young people are occupied in meaningful,

supervised activities after school. After-school programs have helped reduce the juvenile crime rate. Adolescents are less likely to engage in risky behaviors, such as tobacco use, when they have after-school programs to go to. Children watch less television (which has been associated with aggressive behavior and other negative consequences). Finally, injuries and victimization decline in communities previously plagued by crime.

After-school programs also contribute to raising children's self-confidence as well as academic performance. Both teachers and parents report that children who participate in after-school programs develop better social skills and learn to handle conflicts in more socially acceptable ways. Children indicate that they have higher aspirations for their future, including greater intentions to complete high school and attend college. Participants in programs that focus on helping children prepare for college have gone on to do so in impressive numbers.

Families able to enroll their children in good programs indicate that their children are safer and more successful in school. These families also develop a greater interest in their child's learning. In addition, children develop new interests and skills and improve their school attendance. Both children and school systems benefit from after-school programs, which lessen the need to retain children in grade due to poor academic progress and to place children in special education.

In many cases, communities have come together to improve the availability of after-school programs. Partnerships among schools, local governments, law enforcement, youth- and community-based organizations, social and health services,

and businesses have resulted in a number of high-quality after-school programs. These partnerships foster a greater volunteer spirit and provide opportunities for parents to increase their parenting skills and participate in program activities.

Creating High-Quality After-School Programs

From school to school, neighborhood to neighborhood, and community to community, every after-school program is different. Successful programs respond to community needs: Their creation is the result of a community effort to evaluate the needs of its school-age children when school is not in session.

Even so, certain characteristics are indicative of exemplary programs in general. First and foremost, good after-school programs set goals and have strong leadership and effective managers who carry them forward and plan for long-term sustainability. Quality programs hire skilled and qualified staff, provide them with ongoing professional development, and keep adult-to-child ratios low and group sizes manageable.

While many programs offer homework support and tutoring, successful programs ensure that academic-linked activities are fun and engaging. Parents often want computer, art, and music classes, as well as opportunities for their children to do community service. Thus good after-school programs reflect a commitment to promote knowledge, skills, and understanding through enriching learning opportunities that complement the school day.

Good after-school programs reach out to the families of children in the program, keeping them informed of their children's activities and providing opportunities to volunteer. Building partnerships with the community only serves to strengthen the partnerships with families and the program as a whole. Communities that are involved in after-school programs provide volunteers, establish supporting networks of community-based and youth-serving organizations, offer expertise in management and youth development, and secure needed resources and funding for programs.

These partnerships share the common goal of helping children grow up safe and smart. Linking the after-school program with children's learning experiences in the classroom improves children's academic achievement. Toward this end, there are a number of strategies that can be incorporated into an after-school program. Coordinating what's learned during the regular school day with after-school

activities and establishing linkages between school day teachers and after-school personnel can go a long way toward helping students learn.

From the very start, effective programs use well-planned, continuous evaluations to judge the efficacy of their efforts based on established, accepted goals for the program. Evaluations typically gather information from students, parents, teachers, school administrators, staff, and volunteers that can be used for a variety of purposes, such as measuring students' academic progress, making improvements in program services, and identifying the need for additional resources.

For many children in neighborhoods across America, after-school programs provide a structured, safe, supervised place to be after school for learning, fun, and friendship with adults and peers alike. This report will share some of those places with you.

Chapter 1

The Potential of After-School Programs

We must make sure that every child has a safe and enriching place to go after school so that children can say no to drugs and alcohol and crime, and yes to reading, soccer, computers and a brighter future for themselves.

—President Clinton

The Need

Working families increasingly find it difficult to care for their children during the afternoon and early evening hours. Overall, more than 28 million school-age children have parents who work outside the home.¹ Currently, six million children K-8 participate in before- and after-school programs.² In 69 percent of all married couple families with children ages 6-17, both parents work outside the home; in 71 percent of single mother families and 85 percent of single father families with children ages 6-17 the custodial parent is working.³ The gap between parents' work schedules and their children's school schedules can amount to 20 to 25 hours per week.⁴ Many of these children do not have access to affordable, quality care during the hours before and after school. To meet this demand, communities are creating quality after-school programs.

As this chapter shows, school-age children and teens who are unsupervised during the hours after school are far more likely to use alcohol, drugs, and tobacco; engage in criminal and other high-risk behaviors; receive poor grades; display more behavior problems; and drop out of school than those children who have the opportunity to benefit

from constructive activities supervised by responsible adults. In a 1994 Harris poll, more than one-half of teachers singled out "children who are left on their own after school" as the primary explanation for students' difficulties in class.⁵

However, there is a chronic shortage of after-school programs available to serve children. Demand for school-based after-school programs outstrips supply at a rate of about two to one. Seventy-four percent of elementary and middle school parents said they would be willing to pay for such a program, yet only about 31 percent of primary school parents and 39 percent of middle school parents reported that their children actually attended an after-school program at school.⁶ Overall, 85 percent of adults believe it is difficult for parents to find after-school programs for children and teens in their communities.⁷

Finding quality programs to meet the needs of children moving from elementary to middle school years is even more challenging in communities where after-school resources decline abruptly after elementary school.⁸ Middle school children are often "too old for child care" and "too

young for self-care.”⁹ The transition to middle school marks the time when children are in early stages of adolescence, asking for greater autonomy and are able to use it more successfully if they receive support, attention, and supervision from caring adults.¹⁰

The lack of affordable, accessible after-school opportunities for school-age children means that an estimated five to seven million, and up to as many as 15 million “latchkey children” on any given day go home to an empty home after school.¹¹ Forty-four percent of third graders spend at least a portion of their out-of-school time unsupervised,¹² and about 35 percent of 12-year-olds are left by themselves regularly while their parents are at work.¹³ Millions of parents—and their children—are being shortchanged.

In addition, as states begin to see the effects of the federal welfare reform legislation of 1996 and start moving large proportions of the families in their caseloads into work-related activities, greater numbers of welfare recipients are likely to need care for their children. Research has shown that some of the largest disparities between need and availability of care for children are specifically in the area of school-age programming. In some urban areas, the current supply of after-school programs for school-age children will only meet as little as 20 percent of the demand by the year 2002.¹⁴

Quality after-school programming can fill many needs of families, children, and communities. Such programs can meet family needs for adult supervision of children during after-school hours, and they can provide children with healthy

alternatives to and insulation from risk-taking and delinquent behavior.

The Support

The support for after-school programs remains overwhelmingly strong. According to the YMCA of the USA, nearly 100 percent of those polled agreed that it is important for children to have an after-school program that helps them develop academic and social skills in a safe and caring environment.¹⁵ In a recent 1999 Mott Foundation/JC Penney Nationwide Survey on After-School Programs, ninety-one percent of adults say it is important to them personally to ensure that children in their community have access to after-school programs.¹⁶ Ninety percent of adults favor providing after-school programs to children between the hours of 3 and 6 p.m. Three-quarters of adults believe that after-school programs could have an impact in preventing school violence, like the Columbine High School shootings in Littleton, Colorado. Agreement even crosses partisan lines with 94 percent of Democrats, 93 percent of Independents, and 89 percent of Republicans agreeing that there should be some type of organized activity after school.¹⁷ Finally, 66 percent of those polled reported that they would support the use of additional federal or state taxpayer money to make daily after-school programs accessible to all children.¹⁸

Adults want to see after-school programs provide children with a safe environment, teach children respect for people different from themselves, provide structured, adult supervision, tutoring and homework help, and teach ways to resolve conflict with other young people.¹⁹ The majority of parents want their children to attend after-school programs, and most believe the programs should focus on educational enrichment,

such as computer clubs, arts classes, music courses, and community service.²⁰

Local, state, and national officials also want after-school programming. One of five top recommendations of the 1998 United States Conference of Mayors' National Summit was expanding after-school programming. Delaware Governor Thomas R. Carper, the 1999 Chairman of the National Governor's Association (NGA), made expanding after-school programs one of his top three priorities for the NGA.

The Potential

Quality after-school programs can provide positive environments and enriching age-appropriate activities. School-age children attending these programs can build on what they have learned during the regular school day, explore further areas of skills and interest, and develop relationships with caring adults, all of which are factors related to their success as adults.²¹ Quality after-school programs develop children's abilities so that they may grow into healthy, responsible adults.

While past research has focused on how children spend their time after school and what level of supervision is provided, current research has begun to examine the various types of after-school activities and their effects on the cognitive, social, physical, and emotional development of children. Researchers have identified three major functions of after-school programs: providing supervision, offering enriching experiences and positive social interaction, and improving academic achievement.²² Different programs may focus more strongly on a particular area. More and more, practitioners and parents are turning to after-school programs as an opportunity to prevent risky behaviors in children and

youth and to improve student learning. Researchers are also asking how do we link social, emotional, physical development as leading to academic change? In other words, practitioners and parents want after-school programs that are safe and smart.

Researchers have also recently begun examining whether the amount of time spent in a quality after-school program has effects on the cognitive and emotional development of children. Preliminary findings from one study indicate that effects were greatest for students participating in after-school programs with high rates of average attendance. Students in high-attendance projects were more likely to read and understand more than they did before attending the program, finish their homework, feel safe after school, and learn to speak and understand English.²³

The after-school activities included in this report were included because they showed evidence of success—whether empirical or anecdotal—and were identified by local, regional, and national experts as particularly innovative or promising. Although more evaluation efforts are in place since the first edition of *Safe and Smart*, evaluation of after-school activities is still limited. Often, the information available about a program is based on the opinions of experts instead of on formal evaluations.²⁴ This chapter showcases promising independent and self-reported evaluation data on after-school activities. It also indicates the critical need to fund and conduct more extensive, rigorous evaluations of after-school activities and their impact on the safety, social development, and academic achievement of children.²⁵

Desired Outcomes for After-School Programs by Wellesley College National Institute on Out-of-School Time:

- Relationships with caring, competent, and consistent adults;
- Access to enriching learning activities;
- Access to safe and healthy environments; and
- Partnerships with families, schools and communities.

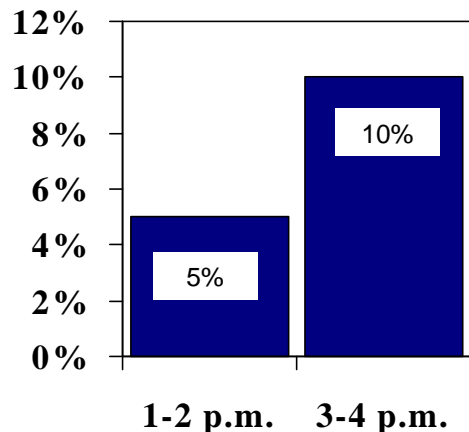
Keeping Children on the Right Track

This period of time between the school bell and the factory whistle is a most vulnerable time for children. These are the hours when children are more likely to engage in at-risk behavior and are more vulnerable to the dangers that still exist in too many neighborhoods and communities.

—Vice President Gore

The rates for both juvenile crimes and the victimization of juveniles peak in the after-school hours (see Exhibit 1). Unlike the serious violent crime offending pattern of adults, violent juvenile crimes occur most often in the hours immediately following school dismissal. The peak that occurs at 3 p.m. (6 percent) is twice as high as the percentage of violent crimes committed by juveniles just one hour earlier, at 2 p.m. (3 percent). A comparison of the crime patterns for school and nonschool days find that the 3 p.m. peak occurs only on school days. The time pattern of juvenile violent crimes on nonschool days is similar to that of adults, with a gradual increase during the afternoon and evening hours, a peak between 8 and 10 p.m.²⁶ Thus juvenile violence peaks in the after-school hours on school days and in the evenings on nonschool days.

Exhibit 1. Violent juvenile crime doubles in the after-school hours on school days



Data Source: Analysis of the FBI's *National Incident-Based Reporting System* master files for the years 1991-1998 [machine-readable data files] containing data from 12 states (AL, CO, ID, IL, IA, MA, MI, ND, SC, UT, VT, and VA).

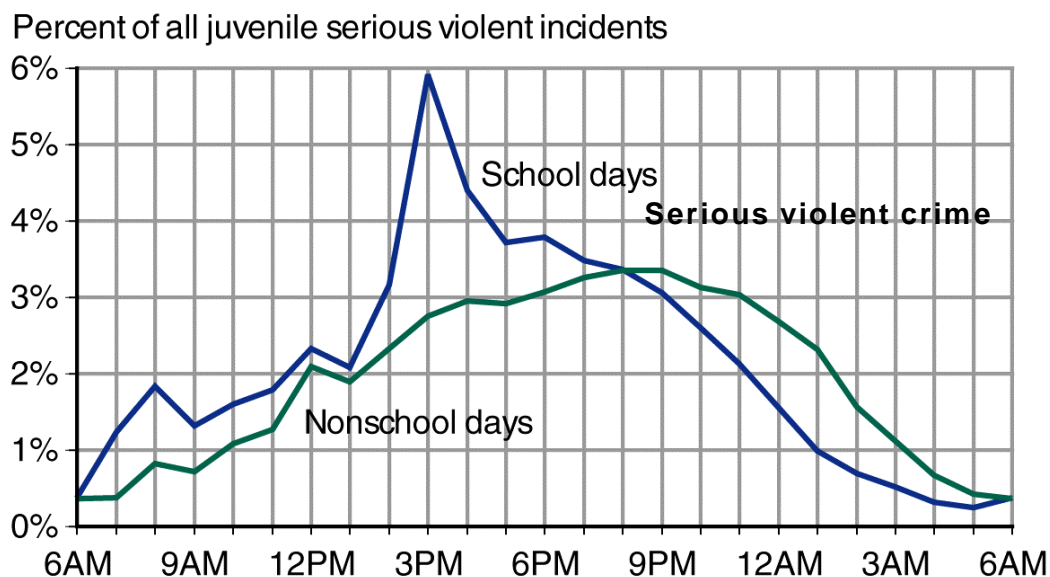
Source: Snyder, H. and Sickmund, M. (1999). *Juvenile Offenders and Victims: 1999 National Report*.

- ▶ A study of gang crimes by juveniles in Orange County, California, shows that these crimes typically occur on school days, with their incidence peaking at 3 p.m. (see Exhibit 2). Data from the study shows that 60 percent of all juvenile gang crime occurs on school days and that, like other juvenile crime, it peaks immediately after-school dismissal.²⁷
- ▶ Crimes involving firearms committed by juveniles also peak at 3 p.m. on school days, the hour that youth leave school.²⁸

The most likely hour of a school day for a juvenile to commit a sexual assault is between 3 p.m. and 4 p.m. In fact, more than one in seven sexual assaults by juveniles occur in the four hours between 3 and 7 p.m. on school days.²⁹

Children are also at a much greater risk of being the victim of a violent crime (for example, murder, violent sex offense, robbery, and assault) in the four hours following the end of the school day, roughly 2 to 6 p.m. (see Exhibit 3). These are different than the three hours that adults are most likely to be victims of violent crime, which is highest from 9 p.m. to midnight.³⁰

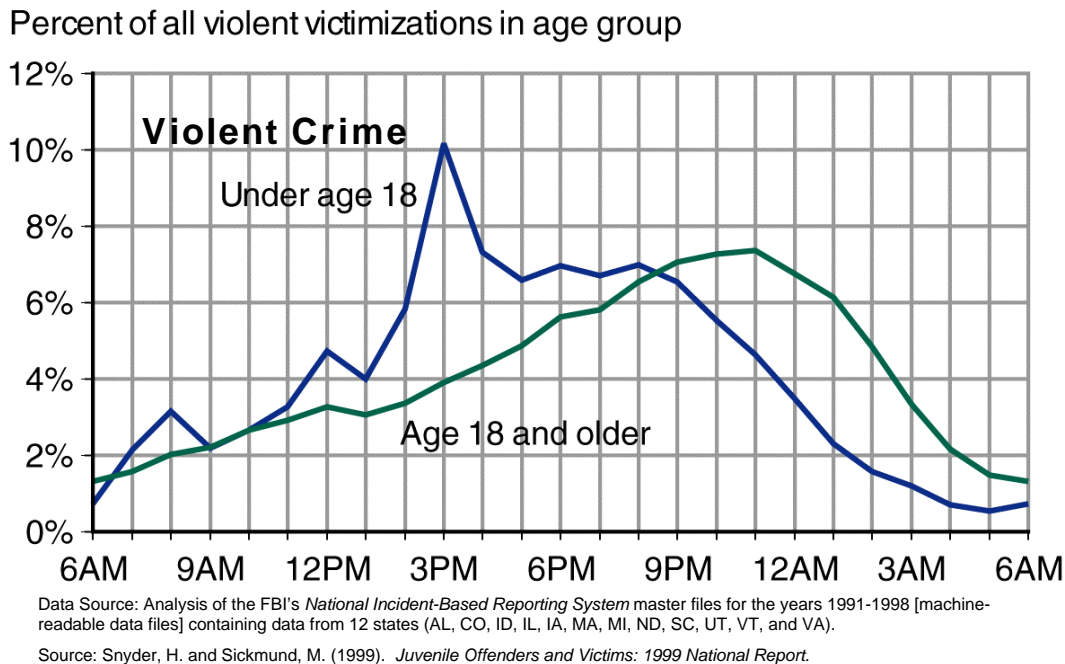
Exhibit 2. Serious juvenile crimes cluster in the hours immediately after the close of school



Data Source: Analysis of the FBI's *National Incident-Based Reporting System* master files for the years 1991-1998 [machine-readable data files] containing data from 12 states (AL, CO, ID, IL, IA, MA, MI, ND, SC, UT, VT, and VA).

Source: Snyder, H. and Sickmund, M. (1999). *Juvenile Offenders and Victims: 1999 National Report*.

Exhibit 3. The violent victimization of juveniles is greatest between 3 and 9 p.m., while adult victimizations are most common between 9 p.m. and midnight



Sixty-nine percent of police chiefs interviewed felt that “providing more after-school programs and educational child care programs” was the most effective strategy to reduce juvenile crime. This strategy was favored over prosecuting more juveniles as adults (17 percent favored), hiring more police officers to investigate juvenile crimes (13 percent) and installing more metal detectors and surveillance cameras in schools (1 percent).³¹ In fact, 86 percent of police chiefs agreed that overall, “expanding after-school programs and educational child care programs like Head Start would greatly reduce youth crime and violence.”³²

Quality after-school programs can meet family needs by providing responsible adult supervision of children during nonschool hours. By offering young people rewarding, challenging, and age-appropriate activities

in a safe, structured, and positive environment, after-school programs help to reduce and prevent juvenile delinquency and to insulate children from injury and violent victimization. After-school programs give children and teenagers positive reasons to say “yes.”

Preventing crime, juvenile delinquency, and violent victimization. The following studies show that quality after-school programming can have a positive impact on children and youth at risk for delinquent behaviors.

Decrease in juvenile crime

- In Waco, Texas, students participating in the Lighted Schools program have demonstrated improvements in school attendance as well as decreased juvenile delinquent behavior over the course of

the school year. Juvenile crime has dropped citywide by approximately 10 percent since the inception of the program.³³

- ▶ New York City housing projects with Boys and Girls Clubs on site experienced a juvenile arrest rate that was 13 percent lower than that of similar housing projects without a club, according to a recent study by Columbia University. In addition, drug activity was 22 percent lower in projects with a club.³⁴
- ▶ After the Beacon Program in New York City increased youth access to vocational arenas, therapeutic counseling, and academic enrichment after school, police reported fewer juvenile felonies in the community.³⁵
- ▶ Canadian researchers found that at the end of a year-long after-school skills development program in a public housing project, the number of juvenile arrests declined 75 percent while they rose by 67 percent in a comparable housing development without a program over the same period of time.³⁶

Most kids will respond if they think someone really cares about them. That's what gets them into gangs in the first place. That's why I try to provide them with safe after-school activities. A lot of times all they need to stay out of trouble is a place to go, and someone who's there for them.

*—Robert Montoya, counselor,
Truman Middle School,
Albuquerque, New Mexico, on how
providing after-school programs
helps reduce youth involvement in*

gangs. Montoya has helped almost 100 youths leave their gangs.³⁷

Decrease in violent victimization

- ▶ The Baltimore Police Department saw a 44 percent drop in the risk of children becoming victims of crime after opening an after-school program in a high-crime area. A study of the Goodnow Police Athletic League (PAL) center in northeast Baltimore, the first center to open in May 1995, also indicated that juvenile arrests dropped nearly 10 percent, the number of armed robberies dropped from 14 to 7, assaults with handguns were eliminated, and common assaults decreased from 32 to 20.³⁸
- ▶ While Los Angeles children in the LA's BEST program and those not in the program both reported feeling unsafe in their neighborhoods, children in the program felt significantly safer during the hours after school than nonparticipants.³⁹

Instead of locking youth up, we need to unlock their potential. We need to bring them back to their community and provide the guidance and support they need.

*—Mayor Richard M. Daley,
City of Chicago*

Decrease in vandalism at schools

- ▶ One-third of the school principals from 64 after-school programs studied by the University of Wisconsin reported that school vandalism decreased as a result of the programs.⁴⁰
- ▶ Schools running an LA's BEST program have shown a reduction in reports of school-based crime.⁴¹

Preventing negative influences that lead to risky behaviors, such as drug, alcohol, and tobacco use. After-school programs can provide youth with positive and healthy alternatives to drug, alcohol, and tobacco use, criminal activity, and other high-risk behaviors during the peak crime hours after school.

Youth ages 10-16, who have a relationship with a mentor, are 46 percent less likely to start using drugs, 27 percent less likely to start drinking alcohol, and 33 percent less likely to participate in a violent activity.⁴²

- ▶ A national survey of 10th-graders found that, in comparison to students who spent 5-19 hours weekly in school-sponsored activities, students who spent no time in these activities were 75 percent more likely to use tobacco or drugs, 37 percent more likely to become teen parents, and 50 percent more likely to be arrested.⁴³
- ▶ Young adolescent girls participating in Girls Incorporated's Friendly PEERsuasion after-school program exhibited a decreased likelihood of starting to drink alcohol compared to their peers not in the program. Girls in the program were also more likely to leave situations where friends were using tobacco, drugs, or alcohol and to disengage from peers who smoke or use drugs.⁴⁴
- ▶ Youth who participated in Across Ages, an intergenerational mentoring program in Philadelphia for high-risk middle school students, exhibited positive changes in their knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors concerning substance use and related life skills, according to a

1996 study by the Center for Intergenerational Learning.⁴⁵

- ▶ One study found that eighth graders who were unsupervised for 11 or more hours per week were twice as likely to abuse drugs or alcohol as those under adult supervision.⁴⁶
- ▶ Another study concluded that latchkey children are at a substantially higher risk for truancy, poor grades, and risk-taking behavior, including substance abuse.⁴⁷
- ▶ Almost one-fifth of children who smoke said they smoke during the hours after school.⁴⁸
- ▶ Parents overwhelmingly agreed that The 3:00 Project, which provides after-school programs for middle school students in Georgia, reduced their children's exposure to high-risk situations.⁴⁹
- ▶ A 1995 study gauged the "healthiness" of communities by the prevalence of problem behaviors among youth, grades 9-12, such as drug and alcohol use, sexual activity, depression, and school problems. The communities with structured activities in which most youth participated (for example, extracurricular sports, clubs, community organizations) were five times more likely to be ranked among the healthiest communities. In healthy communities, more than one-half of all youth participated in such activities, whereas only 39 percent of youth participated in structured activities in the least healthy communities.⁵⁰
- ▶ In a 1995 study of eighth- and ninth-grade students, the activities associated with the least desirable outcomes for

drug use and attitudes were going on car rides, hanging out with friends, and attending parties while other after-school activities, such as volunteer work, sports, and spending more time on homework were associated with healthier student outcomes.⁵¹

Decrease in aggressive behavior associated with watching television.

The most frequent activity for children during nonschool hours is television watching, which has been associated with increased aggressive behavior and other negative consequences.⁵² For about one-half of the hours children spend watching television, they are watching by themselves or with other children. In addition, roughly 90 percent of the time is spent watching programs that are not specifically designed for them.⁵³ Children spend an average of almost three hours per day watching television, and 17 percent of children regularly watch more than five hours of television every day.⁵⁴

- ▶ By age 18, the average child has seen 200,000 acts of violence, including 40,000 murders, on television.⁵⁵
- ▶ Three-quarters of a million children ages 12 to 17 watched *The Jerry Springer Show* after school, according to Nielsen ratings, which means that many latchkey kids were watching the talk show.⁵⁶

Enhancing Children's Academic Achievement

After-school programs not only keep children safe and out of trouble, but they also provide a prime opportunity to increase learning. Youth attending formal after-

school programs spend more time in academic activities and in enrichment lessons than do their peers left unsupervised after school.⁵⁷ Research has shown that children whose out-of-school time includes 20-35 hours of constructive learning activities do better in school.⁵⁸

Better grades and higher academic achievement.

Students in after-school programs show better achievement in math, reading, and other subjects.⁵⁹ Preliminary research indicates an increase in student achievement when compared to past performance and to control groups made up of similar students not involved in the programs.

- ▶ Children in grades 3-6 who were most involved in after-school recreation programs had significantly higher grades in math, science, reading, and language grades and higher self-esteem than nonparticipants.⁶⁰
- ▶ Fourth-graders in the FOUNDATIONS Inc., before- and after-school enrichment programs outperformed comparison students in reading, language arts, and math.⁶¹
- ▶ The Boys & Girls Club of America developed Project Learn: The Educational Enhancement Program (EEP), a program designed with five major components: homework help and tutoring, high-yielding learning and leisure activities, parent involvement, collaboration with schools, and incentives. The 30-month evaluation compared youth in clubs with the EEP to youth in clubs without EEP and youth in other after-school programs. Findings about Project Learn participants include an increase in their grade average and

improved school attendance and study skills.⁶²

- ▶ Fourth-graders who participated in the Ohio Urban School Initiative School-Age Child Programs exceeded the statewide percentage of students meeting proficient standards in math, writing, reading, citizenship, and science.⁶³
- ▶ In a recent study of higher-success and lower-success elementary schools in Maryland, researchers found that the more successful schools were seeing consistent academic gains as a result of extended-day programs.⁶⁴
- ▶ Preliminary findings from the 21st Century Community Learning Center program in Palm Beach County, Florida, indicate that students participating in the program have increased reading and math scores, as well as interpersonal self-management.⁶⁵
- ▶ P.S. 5, a New York community school with an active extended-learning program supported by the Children's Aid Society, showed impressive gains in math and reading scores during the past three years, far surpassing the performance of similar city schools. At I.S. 218, another Children's Aid Society community school, twice as many students as at similar schools are performing at grade level in math and reading.⁶⁶
- ▶ Of the 40 schools involved in the Chicago Lighthouse Program, a citywide after-school program run by the Chicago Public Schools, 30 schools showed achievement gains in average reading scores and 39 schools showed gains in average mathematics scores.⁶⁷

- ▶ Students at the Beech Street School in Manchester, New Hampshire, home of the Y.O.U. after-school program, improved in reading and math on the state test. In reading, the percentage of students scoring at or above the basic level in reading increased from only 4 percent in 1994 to almost one-third of students in 1997, and in math, the percentage of students scoring at the basic level increased from 29 percent to almost 60 percent. Teachers in Manchester, New Hampshire, reported that more than one-half of students participating in the Y.O.U. after-school program earned better grades than before.⁶⁸

I used to hate math. It was stupid. But when we started using geometry and trigonometry to measure the trees and collect our data, I got pretty excited. Now I'm trying harder in school.

*—Teen, Y.O.U. Program
Manchester, New Hampshire*

- ▶ Students who participated in Louisiana's Church-Based After-School Tutorial Network, a program that operates in sites throughout the state and targets at-risk children in grades K-8, increased their grade averages in math and language arts, depending on the number of years they attended.⁶⁹
- ▶ According to a University of California – Los Angeles evaluation, students in LA's BEST citywide after-school program made academic gains far beyond those of students in the comparison group.⁷⁰
- ▶ In the Lighted Schools program in Waco, Texas, two sites experienced a 38

percent decrease during the 1996-1997 school year in the number of program participants failing two or more classes.⁷¹

- ▶ More than one-half of the students in The 3:00 Project, a statewide network of after-school programs in Georgia, improved their grades in at least one subject.⁷²
- ▶ In Memphis, Tennessee, students who participated on a regular basis in an after-school program with group tutoring and a language arts curriculum showed higher achievement than their peers according to state assessment.⁷³
- ▶ In a study of an after-school program with a predominantly Hispanic, low-income student population, findings showed that high involvement in after-school activities (at least three activities per week) had the greatest impact on academic performance.⁷⁴
- ▶ In a 1995 study, high school students who participated in extracurricular activities were shown to be three times more likely to score in the top 25 percent on math and reading assessments than their peers who did not. In North Carolina, high school student athletes had higher grade point averages than non-athletes.⁷⁵

Increased interest and ability in reading.

After-school programs that include tutoring in reading and writing, as well as reading for pleasure, can increase reading achievement for students. Research indicates that reading aloud to children is the single most important activity for their future success in reading. Opportunities for students to practice reading and writing to achieve

fluency increase their level of reading achievement.

Literacy development through practice and experience

After school, students experience what has been referred to as an informal curriculum, which greatly impacts children's literacy development. When the informal curriculum exposes children to an environment rich in language and print, students show increased ability in reading and in math. Students need the opportunity to practice and develop their literacy skills through intelligent discussions with adults, storytelling, reading and listening, games, and other activities and interactions that extend learning beyond the regular school day.⁷⁶

Quality, research-based tutoring programs, which fit well into after-school programs, produce improvements in reading achievement.⁷⁷ Tutoring can also lead to greater self-confidence in reading, increased motivation to read, and improved behavior.⁷⁸

- ▶ Reading scores of fourth graders who participated in the Ohio Urban School Initiative School-Age Child Programs were 13 percentage points higher than their nonparticipating peers.⁷⁹
- ▶ Youth participating in the Boys and Girls Club Educational Enhancement Program (EEP) reported more enjoyment of reading, verbal skills, writing, and tutoring than those who did not participate.⁸⁰
- ▶ In a major research study on preventing reading difficulties, the National Academy of Sciences found significant increases in reading achievement for

students participating in programs that provided extra time in reading instruction by tutoring children individually.⁸¹

- ▶ According to staff at the Psychological Corporation, the testing division of Harcourt, the gains made by students in the Voyager program in the Jefferson County, Kentucky, Rising Stars program, represented one-year's growth (for example, gains of 4.5 in reading total) although the program operated for four weeks.⁸²
- ▶ According to researchers at UCLA, limited-English-proficient students with high rates of participation in LA's BEST had higher rates of English language redesignation.⁸³
- ▶ In a study of after-school programs receiving cooperative extension assistance, teachers said that one-third of participating children earned better grades and developed a greater interest in recreational reading.⁸⁴
- ▶ Teachers in Manchester, New Hampshire, reported that 63 percent of students participating in the Y.O.U. after-school program developed an interest in recreational reading.⁸⁵
- ▶ Elementary students in the Los Angeles 4-H after-school program made significant progress in language arts.⁸⁶
- ▶ An after-school tutoring program in which low-achieving second and third graders were tutored one hour, twice each week, by university students, retirees, and mothers generated strong improvements in reading skills.⁸⁷

Decrease in amount of television watching

Studies show that children who watch excessive amounts of television perform poorly on literacy-related activities when compared to their peers.⁸⁸ Children typically learn far less from television than they do from a comparable amount of time spent reading.⁸⁹ Excessive television viewing (five hours or more per day) is correlated with substantially lower test scores in reading and math.⁹⁰

Unfortunately, the most common activity for children after school is television watching. After school and in the evenings, children watch, on average, about 23 hours of television each week, and teens watch about 22 hours per week.⁹¹

- ▶ According to the 1997 Panel Study of Income Dynamics conducted by researchers at the University of Michigan, children spend 1.3 hours a week reading, 1.7 hours a week studying, and 12 hours a week watching television. For each hour more per week a child spends reading, their test score increased. In contrast, for each additional hour a child watches television, their score decreased.⁹²
- ▶ In a 1995 survey of eighth and ninth graders, 34 percent reported spending less than an hour a day on homework while 78 percent reported spending an hour or more on television, videos, or computer games.⁹³
- ▶ In a 1998 study, on average, 12-year-olds spend five to six hours per week studying or reading for pleasure, compared to 15 hours per week watching television.⁹⁴

- ▶ Fifty-three percent of children in the Los Angeles 4-H after-school program said they would watch more television if they were not at 4-H.⁹⁵

On Being a Latchkey Kid:

Maya, a seventh grader considers her home alone time expanding to what she considered “a lot,” including times after dark. “I still really hate staying by myself,” she told me, “[but] I guess I’ve gotten used to it.” Maya’s dislike for being home alone had more than one cause. A difficult experience early in her life had left her with a residue of anxiety, manifested in fears of dark rooms and creaking floors. Watching TV tended to calm her, but if she watched something scary, she said, it could “give me nightmares for a really, really long time, and I’ll be scared to do everything.”⁹⁶

Sometimes there are so many things you can’t do. I can’t have company or leave the house. If I talk on the phone, I can’t let anyone know I’m here alone. But I really think they’ve figured it out, you know. Duh.

—Amy, 14

Development of new skills and interests.

After-school programs often offer activities in which children would not otherwise be involved during the school day or at home. They give children the opportunity both to develop new skills and to pursue existing interests in greater depth.

- ▶ When asked to name a new talent or skill developed in their after-school program in Manchester, New Hampshire, 44 percent of students named an educational area. Teachers reported that three-fourths of participating children developed an interest they would not

otherwise have in new topics and activities.⁹⁷

Improved school attendance, increased engagement in school, and reduced drop-out rate. After-school programs can help children develop greater confidence in their academic abilities and a greater interest in school, both of which have been shown to lead to improved school attendance.⁹⁸

- ▶ A comparative study of 10- to 16-year-olds who applied to the Big Brothers-Big Sisters of America found that participants improved school attendance and performance, and attitudes toward completing schoolwork.⁹⁹
- ▶ A pilot study of six LA’s BEST sites found LA’s BEST students had fewer absent days in middle school than their peers in the comparison schools.¹⁰⁰
- ▶ An evaluation of the Ohio Urban School Initiative School-Age Child Programs found that school absence and tardiness were reduced among students who participated in after-school programs. Eighth-graders in the program reduced the number of days missed from 18 to 5.¹⁰¹
- ▶ Research shows that students who participate in extracurricular activities during their out-of-school time have an increased sense of attachment to and engagement in their school, which decreases their likelihood of academic failure and dropping out. They also have better attendance, academic achievement, and more aspirations for college.¹⁰²
- ▶ Even after controlling for prior performance, children who attended

more days of their after-school program were rated by their classroom teachers as having better work habits and better interpersonal skills in comparison to children who attended fewer days. Children who attended more days also were less likely to endorse aggression as a response to peer conflict, and school attendance was better.¹⁰³

- ▶ At Birchwood Elementary in Chattanooga, Tennessee, students who participated in the after-school program missed an average of 2.5 days of school during the year, down from 10.5 days in the previous year, before the after-school program was implemented.¹⁰⁴
- ▶ At four sites of the Lighted Schools program in Waco, Texas, 57 percent of participating students improved their school attendance.¹⁰⁵
- ▶ Seventy percent of parents and teachers agreed that attendance had improved because of middle school students participation in The 3:00 Project in Georgia.¹⁰⁶
- ▶ The Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program, a cross-age tutoring program that trains older students to tutor younger students, has effectively reduced dropout rates. The dropout rate for students who participate in this program is 1 percent, while a comparison group's rate was 12 percent. (The national average is 14 percent.)¹⁰⁷

A parent was telling the teacher that their child was begging to go to school even though she had a fever because she was so excited about what she was doing in the after-school program.

*—Sister Judy Donovan,
Valley Interfaith ISD, Brownsville,
Texas, an organizer with the
Industrial Areas Foundation*

Turning in more and better quality homework. Most after-school programs offer some type of homework assistance, whether it is a scheduled daily homework time, one-on-one tutoring, or a homework club or center. Staffed by teachers, paraprofessionals, older students, and volunteers, participating children can draw on a variety of resources to tackle difficult homework. Also, the structure of an after-school program can make homework part of students' daily routine, which helps to explain why children in after-school programs display better work habits than their peers.¹⁰⁸

- ▶ According to teachers' and parents' reports, after students began participating in the Ohio Urban School Initiative School-Age Child Programs, they were more likely to have their homework completed and turned in on time. Suspensions and expulsions were also fewer after students participated in after-school programs. Parents reported they were able to work additional hours or move from part-time to full-time employment because the after-school program was affordable.¹⁰⁹
- ▶ More than 70 percent of students, parents, and teachers agreed that children received helpful tutoring through The 3:00 Project, a statewide network of after-school programs in Georgia. More than 60 percent of students, parents, and teachers agreed that children completed more and better prepared homework because of their participation.¹¹⁰

- ▶ In the Los Angeles 4-H after-school program, more than 85 percent of students reported that they received help with homework, and 90 percent said they finished their homework while attending the program each day. More than one-half of teachers rated the students' homework completion as improved or much improved.¹¹¹
- ▶ According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Cooperative Extension Service Youth-at-Risk Initiative study, teachers said that one-third of children were completing more and better quality homework assignments due to their participation in a program.¹¹²

I just used to hang out after school before coming to The 3:00 Project. Now I have something to do and my schoolwork has improved!

—*Seventh-grade student*

More time on task. Some students take three to six times longer than others to learn the same thing.¹¹³ After-school programs offer more time for learning in new, fun ways for all students, especially those who may need extra help or individual assistance.

- ▶ Studies suggest that increased student achievement can result from additional instructional time when the time is well structured and activities are tailored to individual needs and abilities.¹¹⁴

Reduced retention in grade and placement in special education. Some school districts, such as Chicago and Washington, D.C., are making concerted efforts to provide students at risk of non-promotion with after-school and summer extended learning opportunities. These

programs give children the extra help they need to improve achievement in reading and math so that they not be kept behind.

A recent report by the National Academy of Sciences concludes that many reading disabilities are preventable. Children without literature-rich environments and strong reading instruction are much more likely to show delayed or impeded development of their reading ability. One major recommendation in the report is to increase the opportunities for children to engage in independent reading, an activity well-suited to after-school programs.¹¹⁵

- ▶ In 1996, more than one-half of the students who attended Chicago's summer program raised their test scores enough to proceed to high school.¹¹⁶
- ▶ Sixteen percent of children participating in programs supported by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's cooperative extension service assistance avoided being retained in grade.¹¹⁷
- ▶ According to teachers in Manchester, New Hampshire, several students avoided being retained in grade or placed in special education due to their participation in the Y.O.U. after-school program.¹¹⁸

Higher aspirations for the future, including intention to complete high school and to go to college. Caring adults can make a big impression on the way a child thinks about his or her future. By giving children role models and the tools they need to succeed in school, after-school programs can help children realize their full potential. Research shows that appropriate after-school programs for middle school children contribute to increasing rates of

high school graduation.¹¹⁹ Students who spent as little as one to four hours a week in extracurricular activities were almost 60 percent less likely to have dropped out of school by the time they were seniors than their peers who did not participate.¹²⁰

- ▶ According to the 1999 Shell Education Survey of high school youth, students in after-school activities are more likely to: make As and Bs, attend a cultural event or visit a museum in the past year, say they love school or like school a lot, put their best effort into their school work, believe being a good student is important, say their school is preparing them well for college, and plan on attending a four-year college or university than all high school students.¹²¹
- ▶ Young men and women who participated in after-school programs for two years or more reported having stronger homes and expectations for their own future.¹²²
- ▶ Year-long participation in the Quantum Opportunities Program had significant positive effects on economically disadvantaged high school youth. Using a randomized design, this five-year longitudinal study found that program participants showed better high school graduation rates, higher enrollment rates in postsecondary education, lower rates of teen pregnancy, and high levels of community service.¹²³
- ▶ At Chicago's Midtown Educational Foundation (MEF), 95 percent of the inner-city minority youth who are mentored by an adult graduate from high school, whereas 49 percent of their peers without mentors drop out. Sixty-five

percent of mentored students go on to college, compared to 14 percent of unmentored students.¹²⁴

- ▶ In a 1989 Lou Harris Poll, 73 percent of students reported having a mentor helped them raise their goals and expectations for the future.¹²⁵
- ▶ Ninety percent of students in ASPIRA, a nationwide after-school education and leadership program for Hispanic youth, have continued their education beyond high school, whether in college or in technical training. This percentage far exceeds the national average of 45 percent of Hispanic students pursuing postsecondary education.¹²⁶
- ▶ The San Antonio Pre-Freshman Engineering Program (San Antonio PREP) is a summer and after-school program that targets low-income, minority students, helping them develop reasoning and problem-solving skills through mentoring in the fields of math and science. Of the students who participated, 99.9 percent graduated from high school, and 92 percent were either college students or graduates. Eighty percent of college attendees graduated, and 53 percent of college graduates were science or engineering majors.¹²⁷
- ▶ High school students who participate in after-school programs are far more positive about school, about their own schoolwork, and their ambitions for college when compared to all high school students.¹²⁸

Supporting Children's Social Development and Their Relationships with Adults and Peers

After-school programs provide opportunities for children to work and play together in a more informal setting than during the regular school day. The increased interaction with peers contributes to the development of social skills. In addition, after-school programs can help to improve children's self-discipline by setting a routine for time spent outside of school and by giving children the opportunity to make choices among various activities. Children also benefit from increased interaction with caring adults, who serve as role models and mentors. Overall, studies have found that the beneficial effects of after-school programs are strongest for low-income children, children in urban or high-crime neighborhoods, younger children, and boys.¹²⁹

Improved behavior in school. Research shows that children who participate in after-school programs may behave better in class, handle conflict more effectively, and cooperate more with authority figures and with their peers.

Fewer behavioral problems. Children who experience positive emotional climates in their after-school programs exhibit fewer behavioral problems at school.¹³⁰

- ▶ First-grade boys attending programs in which the staff members behaved positively were rated by school teachers as having fewer problems adjusting to school. When after-school staff members were more positive in behavior and words, first-grade teachers reported

boys to have fewer emotional and behavioral problems than when after-school staff were observed to be less positive.¹³¹

- ▶ Teachers reported that third-graders who spent more time than their peers in after-school programs had better work habits, better relationships with their peers, and better emotional adjustment.¹³²
- ▶ In one study, more than one-third of principals reported that children were showing fewer behavior problems because of their participation in after-school programs.¹³³
- ▶ In the Manchester, New Hampshire, after-school program, teachers reported that almost one-half of participating students demonstrated fewer behavioral problems.¹³⁴

Handling conflicts better. Children in after-school programs can learn to handle conflicts by talking or negotiating rather than hitting and fighting.¹³⁵

- ▶ In Georgia, a majority of parents and children agree that middle school youth learned to handle conflicts better and were getting along better with others since they began attending an after-school program.¹³⁶
- ▶ In the New Hampshire program, teachers reported that almost 40 percent of participating students learned to handle conflicts better.¹³⁷

More cooperative with adults and with peers. Children from low-income urban families who attended formal after-school programs or who went home to a parent were less likely to be identified as anti-social or headstrong than unsupervised or informally supervised children.¹³⁸

- ▶ In one program in Los Angeles, more than 60 percent of teachers and 85 percent of parents rated children who participated as making some or much improvement in being cooperative with peers.¹³⁹
- ▶ Nearly one-half of school principals and one-third of teachers reported in another study that after-school programs caused some children to become more cooperative with adults.¹⁴⁰

Better social skills. The after-school environment allows children to interact socially in a more relaxed atmosphere than during the regular school day. Children can develop important interpersonal skills during the out-of-school hours as they work on learning activities or join in recreation together. Research indicates that children with the opportunity to make social connections during after-school hours are better adjusted and happier than those who do not.¹⁴¹

- ▶ In an evaluation of eight sites in the Save the Children Out-of-School Time Rural Initiative, 86 percent of participating youth, ages 12-18, showed improvement in attitude and behavior and 72 percent showed improvement in social skills.¹⁴²
- ▶ Eighty-three percent of school-age child care staff in 71 programs said that some children who had been socially rejected by peers learned healthy ways to make new friends because of their participation in an after-school program.¹⁴³
- ▶ In a survey of after-school programs in Georgia, approximately 60 percent of students and teachers and more than 80

percent of parents agreed that the after-school program enhanced students' interpersonal skills.¹⁴⁴

Improved self-confidence through development of caring relationships with adults and peers.

Youth organizations have indicated that the single most important factor in the success of their programs is the relationship between participants and the adults who work with them. Research identifies a common characteristic of resilient children as having stable relationships with one or more caring adults.¹⁴⁵ Children, especially adolescents, say that they want and seek caring adults they can trust, who listen to and respect them.¹⁴⁶

In one survey, many youths expressed significant interest in spending more time with their parents or guardians and other caring adults. In all, 65 percent of youth say they would like to spend more time with “an adult I can trust and who respects me.” The desire to be with parents or guardians and other caring adults is particularly strong among the youngest youths (third grade). Eighty percent of third-graders want to spend more time with a caring adult. These percentages fall to 38 percent and 44 percent respectively by eighth grade.¹⁴⁷

In addition to interests in building relationships with adults, young men and women express more interest in activities that would enhance their peer relationships. Youth give strong support for more informal programs or places in which their time is not overly structured, where they can stop by, hang out, and be more spontaneous in choosing what they want to do. While youth are most interested in informal activities, many are interested in structured activities as well.¹⁴⁸

Research also shows that children need four to five hours of discussion weekly with knowledgeable adults or peers to support personal growth and development, a finding which the Boys and Girls Clubs of America have incorporated into the operation of their Educational Enhancement Sites in housing developments.¹⁴⁹

We need someone to listen to us—really take it in. I don't have anybody to talk to, so when I have a problem inside, I just have to deal with it myself. I wish there would be more adults that ask questions because that shows that they care and want to know more.

—Cindy, 16

- ▶ An ethnographic study designed to learn more about those programs that provide the most effective and comfortable learning environment was carried out in 30 regions of the United States and involved more than 120 local organizations. Researchers discovered that within the most popular programs youth were offered enriching learning experiences, relished their active engagement in problem solving, were treated as resources and felt needed, and found opportunities to develop positive relationships with adults and peers.¹⁵⁰ The programming in these communities tended to focus on community service, athletics linked to academics, or the arts.
- ▶ High school students in after-school programs also exhibit more positive feelings and attitudes toward the pressures of teen life and are willing to share their talents with the community.¹⁵¹

- ▶ Campus Partners in Learning (CPIL), a mentoring program for teens and youth, found that youths in grades four to nine who are mentored by a caring adult exhibit improvements in self-esteem, perceived scholastic competence, and satisfaction with social skills.¹⁵²
- ▶ One hundred percent of youths participating in the Y.O.U. after-school program in Manchester, New Hampshire, said that the program helps them feel proud of themselves. Youth in the program cited staff as a popular source of advice when they had a problem, second only to family members.¹⁵³

Strengthening Schools, Families, and Communities

“Children and young people have a natural thirst for learning that does not confine itself to the typical school day, week, year—or, for that matter, to the classroom. We must work across agencies and with local organizations to make these learning opportunities available and meaningful.”

—Frank O'Bannon,
Indiana Governor

Many existing after-school programs arose out of a need and a commitment by schools, families, employers, and community members to provide safe, enriching activities to children when they are not in school. In addressing this need, new family-school-community partnerships have formed in local communities across the country, benefiting all involved, especially the children.

More effective use of funding. After-school programs can help school districts save money over the long term because of

decreased student retention and special education placements. Where there is a decrease in juvenile crime due to a program, communities also save resources.

- ▶ Manchester, New Hampshire, saved an estimated \$72,692 during a period of three years because students participating in the Y.O.U. after-school program avoided being retained in grade or being placed in special education.¹⁵⁴
- ▶ *ChildCare Action News* recently reported that preventing one youth from becoming a lifelong criminal saves \$1.3-\$1.5 million. According to the newsletter: “The savings could easily pay for a quality after-school program for 125 children during four years of high school!”¹⁵⁵

Greater family and community involvement in children’s learning and schools. Many after-school programs depend on and draw upon parent and community volunteers. Research shows that when families are involved in schools, students do better. Educators can also expect that when family and community members make an investment, however large or small, in a school-based after-school program, they will tend to be more interested and involved in their own children’s learning, in the learning of all children in the program, and in the life of the school as a whole.

Many recognize “the importance of working with other groups...[because] one group or program cannot be all things to all people,” as a Colorado 4-H extension agent said. Sixty percent of extension agents report that they collaborate with other organizations on programs to serve youth at risk.¹⁵⁶

Increase in capacity to serve children

- ▶ Meeting the great demand by families for quality, affordable after-school programs is one of the major goals of the MOST Initiative. Through community collaboration, the Boston MOST Initiative succeeded in subsidizing 754 additional spaces for children in after-school programs and 300 new spaces in before-school programs. Chicago MOST helped the Chicago Park District to add 10 additional spaces for children to each of 40 promising programs, for a total of 400 new slots. And Seattle MOST created 250 new spaces in both after-school and summer programs.¹⁵⁷

Increase in business support and involvement

- ▶ Margy Hernandez, co-owner of La Mexicana, a tortilla factory in Albuquerque, New Mexico, operates a computer-assisted tutoring program for 40 students per day. Hernandez believes her community involvement has helped her business, which has never been robbed or tagged with graffiti. “When you do right by the community and its children, they do right by you,” Hernandez said. “I think a lot of people would be shocked by how little things can have such a huge impact.”¹⁵⁸
- ▶ In Murfreesboro, Tennessee, schools stay open from 6 a.m. to 7 p.m. for an extended learning program. The City Schools reported increased support from business and industry due, in part, to a schedule for children that better matches the employee workday.
- ▶ Through the leadership of the nonprofit organization T.H.I.N.K., Southern California Edison and other corporations have teamed up with two Episcopal

churches and a Catholic church in downtown Santa Ana, California, to provide tutoring, homework help, and mentoring to more than 400 children and teens at the Noah Project Learning Center. Each of the five T.H.I.N.K. Together Learning Centers uses a team of 75-100 volunteer tutors, many of whom are employees of the sponsoring corporations. At the Highland Street Learning Center, almost 50 volunteers signed up before the volunteer drive had even begun.¹⁵⁹

- ▶ In Los Angeles, the 4-H ASAP (After-School Activity Program) serves more than 1,200 youths in 24 sites with the help of an extensive network of community partners. Since 1993, Unocal, a natural gas company, has paid for 11 percent of the annual operating budget of 4-H ASAP in Los Angeles County.¹⁶⁰ In addition, 14 area colleges and universities along with businesses, parents, community volunteers, and federal, state, and local agencies support 4-H ASAP by providing transportation for field trips and special events; career exploration opportunities; management expertise; educational technology; marketing; and public relations. These groups also donated computers and software, supplies for arts and crafts and learning projects, and nutritious snacks.¹⁶¹

Increase in parental involvement

- ▶ An evaluation of Boys and Girls Club programming in housing projects found that sites with clubs had increased parent involvement in youth activities.¹⁶²
- ▶ At the Challenger Boys and Girls Club in South Central Los Angeles, parents agree to volunteer eight hours a month in the after-school program when they enroll their child. Parent volunteers coordinate transportation, assist in administration, chaperone field trips, and help with homework.¹⁶³
- ▶ The Y.O.U. program in Manchester, New Hampshire, helps parents gain confidence in their own abilities through volunteering and other means. Ninety-five percent of parents reported that they have learned how to be a better parent by observing staff interact in positive ways with the children.¹⁶⁴
- ▶ The Chicago Lighthouse After-School Program offers programs in some schools to teach parents how to help their children with homework. These efforts have sparked renewed community involvement in the schools and are part of a renewed effort to create community schools.¹⁶⁵
- ▶ I.S. 218 in New York City offers English as a second language classes nightly to more than 350 adults and a Saturday program that draws in 150 adults and 100 children for family activities, such as aerobics, computer lab, and additional English as a second language classes.¹⁶⁶

Growth in children's personal sense of community

- ▶ Teenagers say they feel pride and a sense of accomplishment when they help others, whether they care for the elderly or tutor a younger child.¹⁶⁷ A majority of youth in Georgia's 3:00 Project reported that they enjoyed doing volunteer work, that they planned to volunteer in the future, and that they felt they were making a contribution to the community.¹⁶⁸ Service learning can be an important part of after-school

programs, strengthening the connection between children and the community.

- ▶ In a study of three after-school sites in the LA STARS program of 4-H ASAP, researchers found significant improvement in parent-child relationships and community involvement.¹⁶⁹

Development of community schools.

Often, after-school programs involve parents, volunteers, and others in the schools. As they become involved, the schools become a center for the community. There are many models for community schools and many groups involved in their nurturing. These include the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, the National Center for Community Education, the National Community Education Association, the Children's Aid Society, the National Center for Schools and Communities at Fordham University, the Center for Community Partnerships of the University of Pennsylvania, Beacon schools and their expansion through the DeWitt Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund, United Way's Bridges to Success, Schools of the 21st Century, Missouri's Caring Communities, Communities in Schools, and the Institute for Educational Leadership's Community Schools Coalition. In addition, many states and local school systems have adopted the community schools model.

Replication

The Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, associated with Community Schools for more than 60 years, brings extended learning, recreation, and social activities into school buildings under the auspices of local education systems. It is estimated that 10,000 schools in the country have at one

time or another adopted some aspects of this model.¹⁷⁰

Parent and community involvement

- ▶ The West Des Moines Community School District includes parents and community members, teachers, businessmen and -women, and representatives from city government on site-improvement teams that set the direction for each of the district's 15 schools. In addition, a community education advisory council conducts a needs assessment every few years to determine whether facilities and programs offered to all members of the community are still current. Due to the schools' outreach and offerings, 95 percent of parents and community volunteers flow in and out of the schools daily.¹⁷¹
- ▶ As neighborhood centers, the Beacon schools in New York City, provide services for parents and other adults as well as activities for children and youth. Activities for adults include education, sports, recreation, culturally specific programming, support for parental employment, opportunities to volunteer, intergenerational activities, support for families, and immigrant services. In focus-group discussions with more than 225 parents and other community members, participants described the positive effect of the Beacon schools on their lives and that of their children, as well as on their communities and schools.¹⁷²

Improved student performance

The Children's Aid Society has adopted a settlement house approach to schools in New York City, integrating school restructuring with one-stop social services,

cultural opportunities, and recreational activities. The schools focus intensively on improving educational outcomes for children and youth by offering extended learning programs that complement the regular school day. Evaluation evidence indicates that children in these schools increased their ability to read at grade level (10 percent were reading at grade level in third grade, which increased to 35 percent in fifth grade), and improved their performance in math (37 percent of participating students scored at grade level in 1994, and 51 percent scored at grade level in 1996). Finally, attendance levels at these schools is among the highest in New York City, student behavior problems are low, and parent involvement in high.¹⁷³

“We should help steer at-risk children away from a life of trouble through new partnerships with our communities to provide safer neighborhoods and homes. Let’s... provide \$20 million in community youth grants for after-school programs for at-risk children. Neighborhood groups can tap into this money to provide programs that keep children away from crime, provide extra help with school, or prepare them for the workforce.”

*— Tommy Thompson,
Wisconsin Governor,
1999 State-of-the-State Address¹⁷⁴*

Endnotes

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